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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-sixth session

Draft report

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Addendum

Proposed strategic framework for the period 2008-2009

(Item 3 (b))

Programme 18
Economic and social development in Western Asia

1. At its 13th meeting, on 24 August 2006, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered programme 18, Economic and social development in Western Asia, of the proposed biennial programme plan (A/61/6 (Prog.18)).

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the programme and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. Support was expressed for the programme. It was noted that two subprogrammes had been merged into one subprogramme for the biennium 2008-2009. However, concern was expressed as to whether all the mandates of the original two subprogrammes would be implemented effectively under the new subprogramme.

4. It was noted that the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) forged partnerships with some United Nations entities as listed under subprogramme 2. Concern was expressed regarding the need for ESCWA to develop tighter cooperation with the regional office of the Economic Commission for Africa

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in North Africa, in the light of similar language and cultural values in countries in that region.

5. Concern was also expressed with regard to the title of subprogramme 7. It was suggested that the title should read "Mitigation of consequences of conflict on development".

6. The view was expressed that the focus of ESCWA was more on activities at the national level, and clarification was sought on the regional aspect of ESCWA activities, especially those related to the management of natural resources.

7. It was stated that none of the ESCWA member countries was a member of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, making adequate participation difficult.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of programme 18, Economic and social development in Western Asia, of the proposed biennial programme plan, subject to the following modifications:**

Overall orientation

Paragraphs 18.1 and 18.2 should be deleted and replaced with the following:

"18.1 The overall orientation of programme 18 is to foster comprehensive, equitable, integrated and sustainable development and economic and social cooperation in the region and to maintain and strengthen economic relations between the member countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and other countries of the world. ESCWA is responsible for the implementation of the programme.

"18.2 Policy direction for the programme is provided in Economic and Social Council resolutions 1818 (LV) of 9 August 1973 and 1985/69 of 26 July 1985, establishing ESCWA and amending the terms of reference to underscore the social functions of the Commission. Further direction is provided in ESCWA resolution 220 (XX) of 27 May 1999, on the adoption, by ESCWA member countries, of the Beirut Declaration, which envisioned an enhanced role for the Commission at the regional level; and, by the recommendation of the Commission at its twenty-first session (May 2001) that activities focus on a limited number of priorities, on Arab regional integration and on the study of mechanisms that would activate such integration. The internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and in the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and international agreements since 1992, dealing with such matters as trade, sustainable development, social development, finance, and information and communication technologies, provide further policy direction to the programme."

Paragraph 18.3

In the first sentence, after the words "political instability and", add the words "foreign occupation".

The fourth sentence should be deleted.

Paragraph 18.5

The third sentence should read: "Women's equal rights and opportunities to economic and political participation should be further encouraged, although the region achieved general success in making the secondary and tertiary education systems far more accessible to both sexes equally."

Paragraph 18.6

In the last sentence, delete the word "conflict" and replace it with "foreign occupation".

Paragraph 18.7

In the first sentence, after the words "social integration", add "among its member countries".

In the second sentence, after the words "regional integration", add "between member countries".

At the end of the paragraph, add the following sentence:

"Attention should be focused on Arab regional integration and the study of mechanisms that would activate this integration."

Subprogramme 1
Integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development

Expected accomplishments of the Secretariat

Under accomplishment (c), delete the words "regional and interregional".

Add the following new expected accomplishment of the Secretariat:

"(d) Increased use by member countries of tools and techniques to enhance productivity and competitiveness in the production sectors".

Indicators of achievement

In indicator of achievement (c) (ii), delete the words "regional and interregional".

Add the following new indicator of achievement:

"(d) Number of countries adopting innovative technology and management initiatives to enhance competitiveness and more sustainable and efficient use of such technology".

Strategy

Paragraph 18.13

In the third sentence, delete the word "region" and replace it with the word "Commission".

In the third sentence, delete "regional" and after "cooperation", add "among its member States".

Subprogramme 2
Integrated social policies

Objective of the Organization

Delete "in a globalized environment", and replace it with "that is region-specific and culturally sensitive".

Expected accomplishments of the Secretariat

Under accomplishment (a), after the words "to promote and formulate integrated social development policies", add "that are region-specific and culturally sensitive".

Under accomplishment (b), delete the words "address the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including", and add the words "focus on".

Indicators of achievement

Under indicators of achievement (a) (i), add in the last sentence "that are region-specific and culturally sensitive".

Under indicators of achievement (b), delete "the needs of vulnerable groups", and replace it with "women, youth and persons with disabilities".

Strategy

Paragraph 18.17

In the first sentence, after the words "including appropriate population and migration policies and national urban policies and policies that", delete "target vulnerable groups, particularly the youth", and add "focus on women, youth and persons with disabilities."

Paragraph 18.18

After the words "on intersectoral social development programmes and projects", delete "that address the specific needs of vulnerable groups, such as," and add "with particular regard to poverty and unemployment reduction, with a focus on youth, women and persons with disabilities."

Subprogramme 3
Economic development and integration

Expected accomplishments of the Secretariat

Add two new expected accomplishments as follows:

"(d) Greater participation in the multilateral trading system

"(e) Increased facilitation of transboundary flows of goods, services, persons and capital among member countries".

Indicators of achievement

Add two new indicators of achievement as follows:

"(d) Increased number of rules, regulations and policies adopted by member countries in conformity with World Trade Organization provisions and regional agreements"

"(e) Number of countries accepting and/or adopting harmonization schemes proposed by ESCWA in order to facilitate transboundary flows of goods, persons and capital".

Strategy

Add a new paragraph after paragraph 18.25 to read as follows:

"Despite the various efforts made towards regional integration among member States in the 1950s, the basic requirements for achieving economic integration have not been established. In a world moving increasingly towards the establishment of large economic blocs, regional economic integration becomes a matter of vital importance. Two major impediments to regional and international integration and increased competitiveness are backwardness of the transport sector and obstacles and barriers to participation in the multilateral trading system."

Add a new paragraph after paragraph 18.27 to read as follows:

"Emphasis will also be placed on strengthening the negotiation skills of member States in respect of the World Trade Organization negotiation process, continuing to increase their understanding of the opportunities and challenges presented by the World Trade Organization as well as regional integration agreements, defining obstacles and barriers to participation in the multilateral trading system and organizing awareness drives on the role of the Arab free-trade area and other bilateral agreements. Support will be provided in enhancing regional development by analysing existing credit and investment policies and formulating specific recommendations for the improvement of existing investment laws, regulations and incentives in order to increase significantly the attractiveness of member countries to domestic and foreign investors, with particular emphasis on interregional capital flows and the return of capital invested outside the region."

Subprogramme 4
Information and communication technology for regional integration

Objective of the Organization:

Before the words "build an inclusive," add the words "narrow the digital divide and to".

Strategy

Add a new paragraph before paragraph 18.29 to read as follows:

"Western Asia suffers from a widening digital divide: at the internal level, between Gulf and other member countries, on the one hand, and between cities and rural areas, on the other; and externally, between the

region and other regions of the world. Currently, information and communication technology indicators for the region as a whole are lower than world averages. At the same time, the region has development potential that needs to be harnessed in building the information society, particularly in terms of the common language and cultural heritage. Greater efforts need to be deployed in increasing literacy and education levels and tapping human resources and talents, especially among women and the growing youth population."